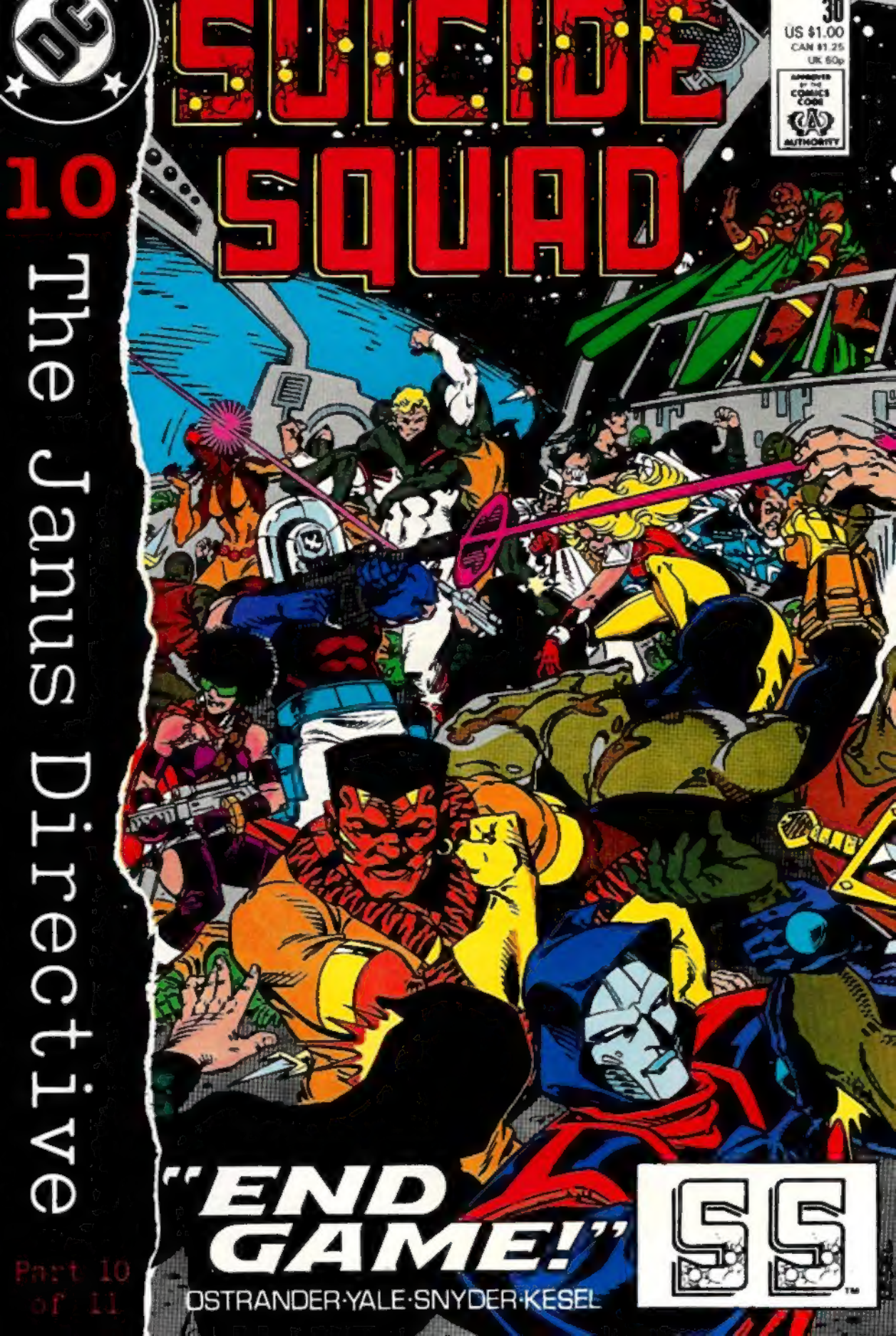
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10
The Janus Directive
Part 10 of 11
"END GAME!"
OSTRANDER·YALE·SNYDER·KESEL
SS

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G 4602

URKAGK!
KRAK!
TRUCE! WHITE FLAG! IT IS ME-- SHAW! MANHUNTER! WALLER'S CLAY PIGEON!
2

WELL, AREN'T YOU A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES!
NO TIME FOR A FRIENDLY REUNION, TURNER. WE'RE ALL UP THE PROVERBIAL CREEK WITHOUT A PADDLE.
THERE'S A WEAPON ON-SCREEN ELECTRO-MAGNETIC PULSE CANNON GET TO FIRE. IT'S GET ON A WAVELENGTH THAT WILL COOK COMPUTERS, MACHINERY AND HUMAN BRAIN TISSUE.
EVE! DID YOU COPY THAT?
HALF A MO'! THAT'S ME SCARF YOU'RE PEACHIN'-- IT'S GENUINE SILK!
IT'S GENUINE RADDY AND I'LL BUY YOU ANOTHER ONE.
I'LL TAKE YOU TO WHERE THE PULSE CANNON IS, DEMOLISH IT, AND IT'S ALL OVER EXCEPT THE SHOUTING.
YES, SO DID THE KNIGHT-SQUAD. AND SINCE THIS IS A RELAY FREQUENCY, WALLER-- GOD HELP US-- HEARD AS WELL.
SHE'LL WANT THIS TIN BUCKET DESTROYED IMMEDIATELY, BEN. THE LIVES OF THE HOSTAGES WON'T MEAN A DAMN THING TO HER.
ATTENTION ALL UNITS! CONVERGE ON MY SIGNAL! REPEAT-- RENDEZVOUS AND CONVERGE ON MY SIGNAL!

MESSAGE COMING IN OVER THE TELEVISOR, MRS. WALLER.
PATCH IT IN, GIRL.
STEEL HERE.
I'M STILL HERE, TOO. WHAT DO YOU WANT, STEEL?
DON'T GIVE ME GRIEF, WALLER. I DIDN'T ASK TO BE PUT IN CHARGE; IT WAS THE PRESIDENT'S BRIGHT IDEA.* AND WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM.
KOBRA'S ARK IS STILL DESCENDING. WE'VE PLOTTED A TRAJECTORY FOR IT AND THE BLASTED THINGS ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH THE EAST COAST OF AMERICA.
* THE PRESIDENT PUT STEEL IN OVERALL COMMAND IN CHECKMATE #18. -- BOB G.
SO MAYBE IT WILL CRASH IN A CORNFIELD.
AND MAYBE IT WILL MAKE A THREE-POINT LANDING ON PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE! GET SERIOUS, WALLER! THAT ARK'S GOING TO MAKE A BIG HOLE, AND ITS POWER CORE COULD CONTAMINATE THE ENTIRE NORTHEAST CORRIDOR IF IT EXPLODES ON IMPACT!
THAT'S WHY THE PRESIDENT HAS AUTHORIZED A NUCLEAR STRIKE ON THE ARK.

HAVE YOU ALL TAKEN LEAVE OF WHAT RAGGED FOR YOUR MINDS?!?
YOU'RE GOING NUCLEAR WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENT?!? ARE YOU TRYING TO DO KOBRA'S JOB FOR HIM?!?
THE PLAN IS TO EMPLOY A SINGLE MISSILE WITH A LOW MEGATON WARHEAD AND TRUST THAT CAPTAIN ATOM CAN CONTAIN THE DAMAGE TO AN ISOLATED AREA!
THE POTENTIAL RISK HAS BEEN JUDGED LESS THAN LETTING THE ARK CRASH!
WHAT ABOUT OUR PEOPLE?! THERE'S NO TIME TO GET THEM OFF!
YOUR PEOPLE? YOU'VE ALWAYS LABELED AND TREATED THEM AS EXPENDABLE, WALLER.
GET THIS STRAIGHT, STEEL! I TAKE RISKS, BUT I NEVER JUST THROW AWAY MY FOLKS' LIVES! WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS CRIMINAL! INHUMAN! YOU HEAR ME?!
THE POINT IS MOOT, AMANDA. THE BIRD IS AWAY.
SIN.

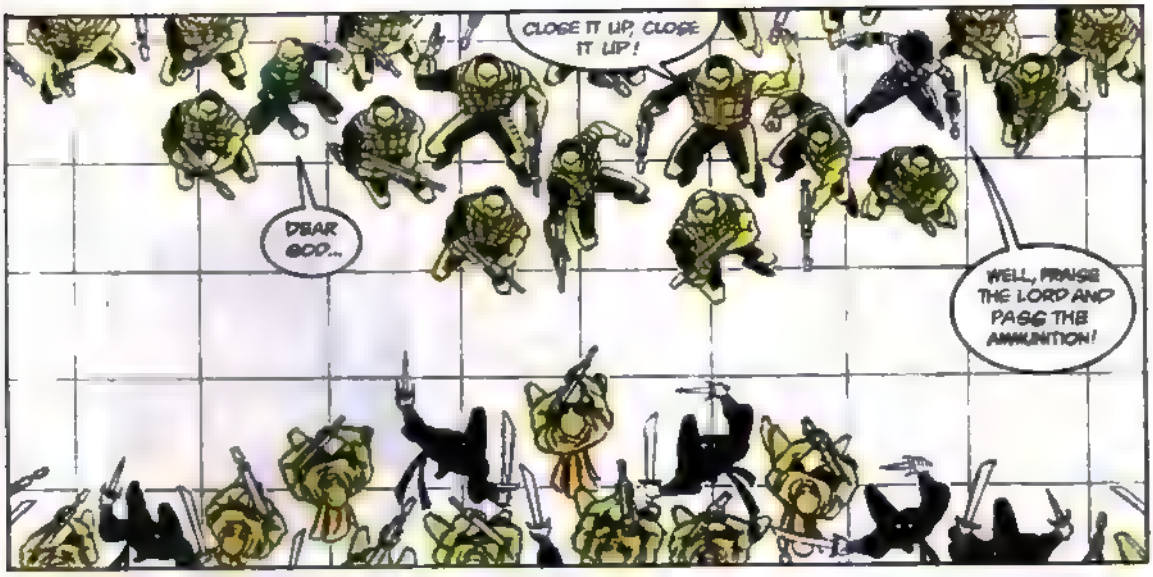
LET THEM COME! I SHALL FIRE THE CANNON MYSELF! HUNDREDS, THOUSANDS-- TENS OF THOUSANDS WILL FALL AT MY FEET! I WILL PREVAIL!
MY LORD! I BEG YOU TO LEAVE NOW!
TAKE CARE, VALLAND. I WILL NOT BE SWAYED. AND REMOVE YOUR HAND BEFORE YOU FEEL THE FANGS OF KOBRA!
WE WILL MAKE SURE THE CANNON IS FIRED. EVEN FROM THIS HEIGHT, THE EASTERN SEABOARD OF THE UNITED STATES WILL BE ANNIHILATED. THE ENSUING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHAOS WILL BRING DOWN CIVILIZATION IN ITS WAKE.
MY LORD, YOU HAVE NEVER UNDERSTOOD. TO US, YOU ARE THE LIVING EMBODIMENT OF KALI. YOU ARE OUR GOD IN MORTAL FORM. HIS FATE IS TO BRING IN THE KALI-YUGA -- THE AGE OF CHAOS.
WE HAVE OUR DESTINIES TO FULFILL. YOURS IS TO BRING AN END TO THE AGE OF ORDER. OURS IS TO DIE FOR YOU.
PLEASE, LORD, LET US BE TRUE TO OUR DESTINIES.

I UNDERSTAND NOW. I AM TO BE THE AVATAR OF CHAOS... AND SO A TERRIBLE BEAUTY IS BORN.
I ACCEPT MY DESTINY, VALLANO? I WILL ESCAPE. CARRY OUT MY WILL. ALL OF YOU HAVE MY BLESSING.
HAIL KOBRA!
ALL PRAISE AND HONOR TO LORD NAGA-NAGA!
7

BLOODY HELL!
KILL THEM WHILE I AIM THE CANNON.

FORGET KOBRA--SCATTER AND GET THE PULSE CANNON!
CANNON'S ALL YOURS, BEN. THERE'S A REWARD ON KOBRA--AND I'M GOING TO NAIL HIS NAGA-NAGA HIDE.
STREWTH! AND I THOUGHT DEADSHOT HAD A DEATH WISH! HE'S NOTHING COMPARED TO TURNER! BLOODY ABO'S GOT A GROUP DEATH WISH!
EIEAH!

MARI!
BLAM!



YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

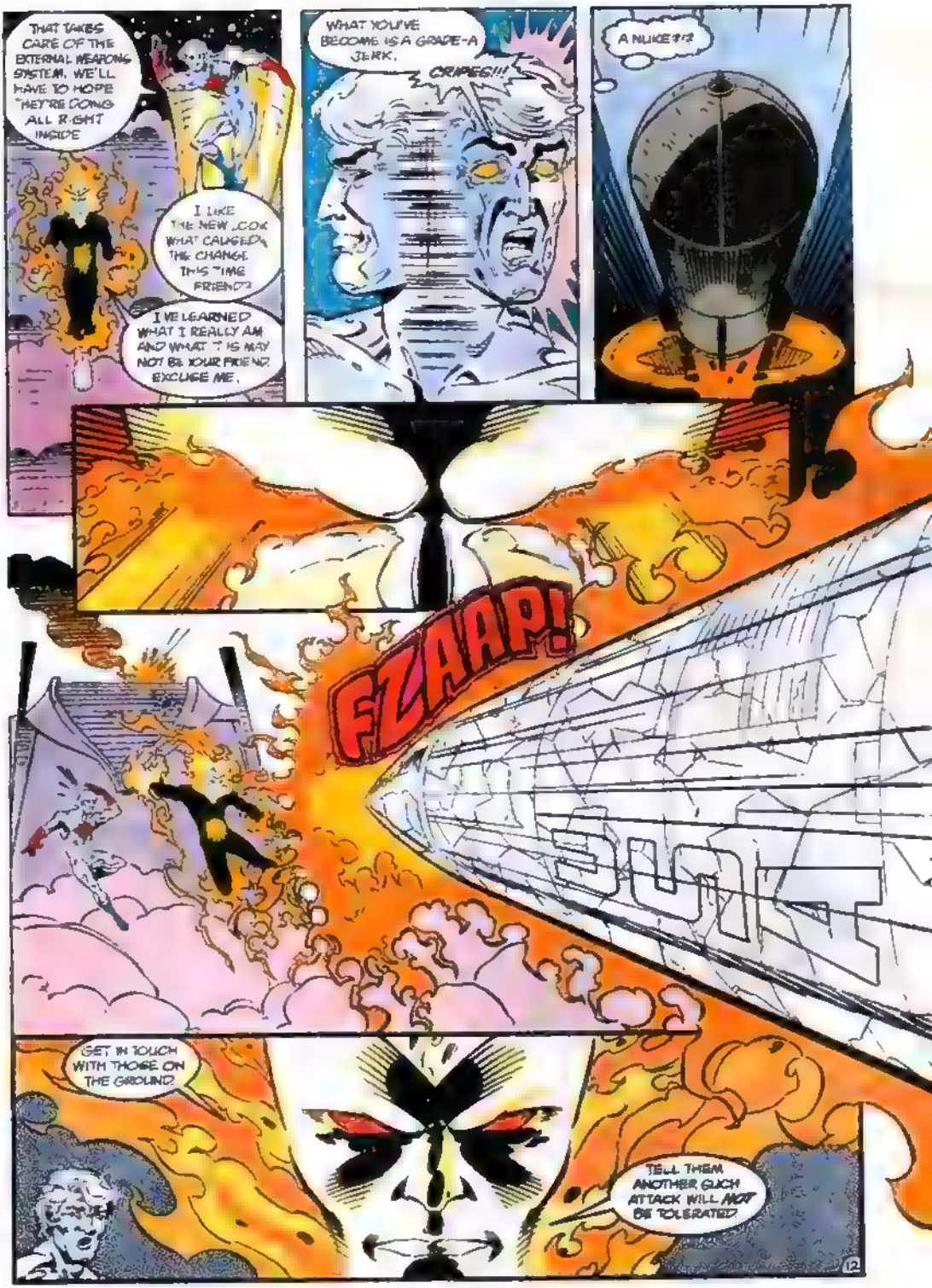
THUK!

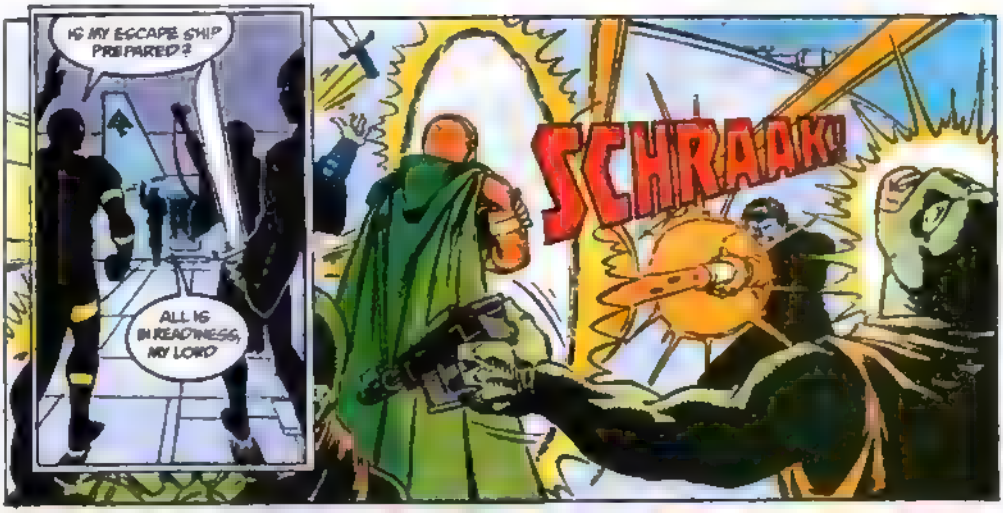
WHAM!

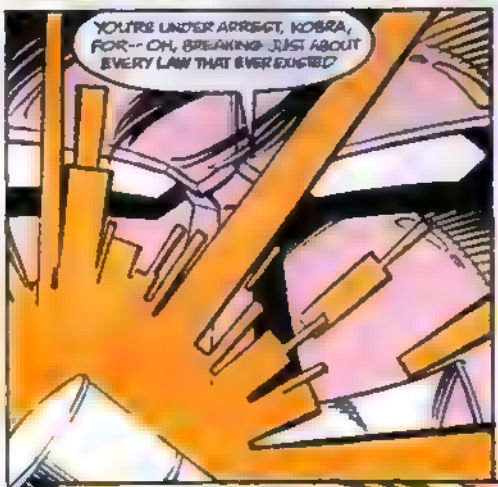
SHWIK!

BRAAAAAAP!

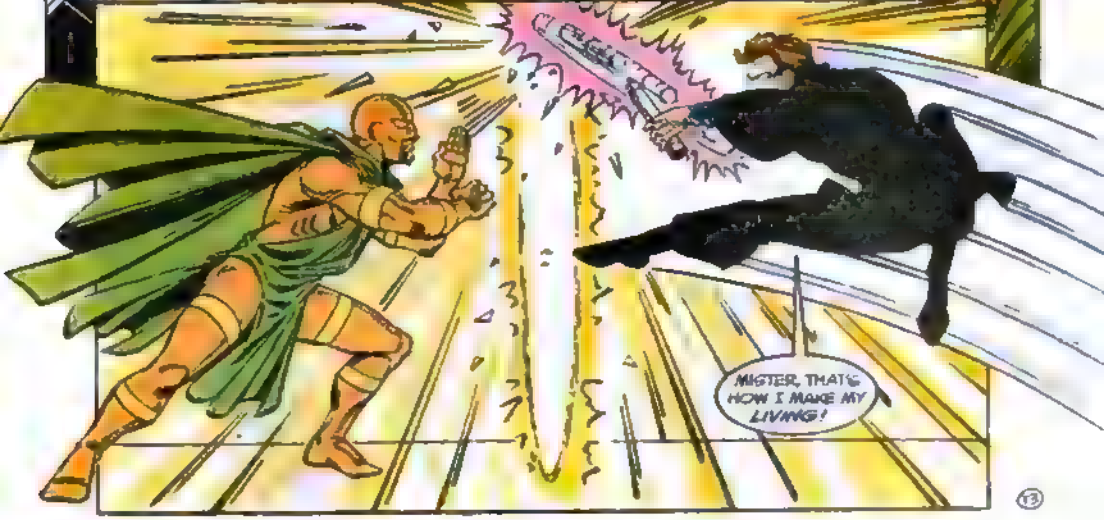
SPLAT


THAT TAKES CARE OF THE EXTERNAL WEAPONS SYSTEM. WE'LL HAVE TO HOPE THEY'RE DOING ALL RIGHT INSIDE
I LIKE THE NEW ..COK WHAT CAUSED THE CHANGE THIS TIME FRIEND?
I'VE LEARNED WHAT I REALLY AM AND WHAT IT IS MAY NOT BE YOUR FRIEND. EXCUSE ME.
WHAT YOU'VE BECOME IS A GRADE-A JERK.
CRIPES!!!
A NUKE?!?
FZAAP!
GET IN TOUCH WITH THOSE ON THE GROUND.
TELL THEM ANOTHER SUCH ATTACK WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.
12


IS MY ESCAPE SHIP PREPARED?
ALL IS IN READINESS, MY LORD
SCHRAAK!


YOU'RE UNDER ARREST, KOBRA, FOR-- OH, BREAKING JUST ABOUT EVERY LAW THAT EVER EXISTED!

THEN TAKE ME IF YOU CAN


MISTER, THAT'S HOW I MAKE MY LIVING!

SNARRRL!
CO-ORDINATING GET AND LOCKER, BUILDING POWER.
THIS WAY!
BRADDA
BRADDA
BRADDA
BRADDA
GET THE PLUGS CANNON! FORGET EVERYTHING ELSE! WE'RE OUT OF TIME!!!

NICE GUN.

MADE IT MYSELF.

MAKE ONE FOR ME?

BRUDDA BRUDDA BRUDDA BRUDDA

PUT ME DOWN!

HEAD SHOTS, DARLING! HEAD SHOTS! POPPING THEIR GUTS IS SO ICKY!

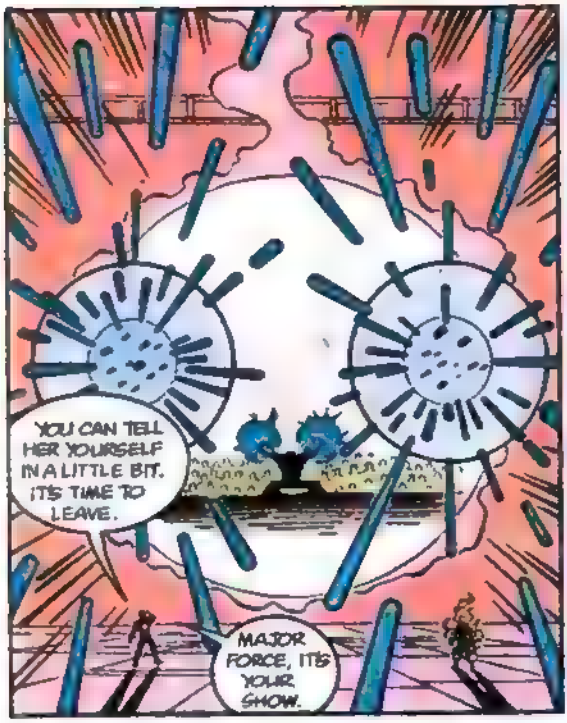
NOW! STOP HIM WHILE HE'S BLIND!

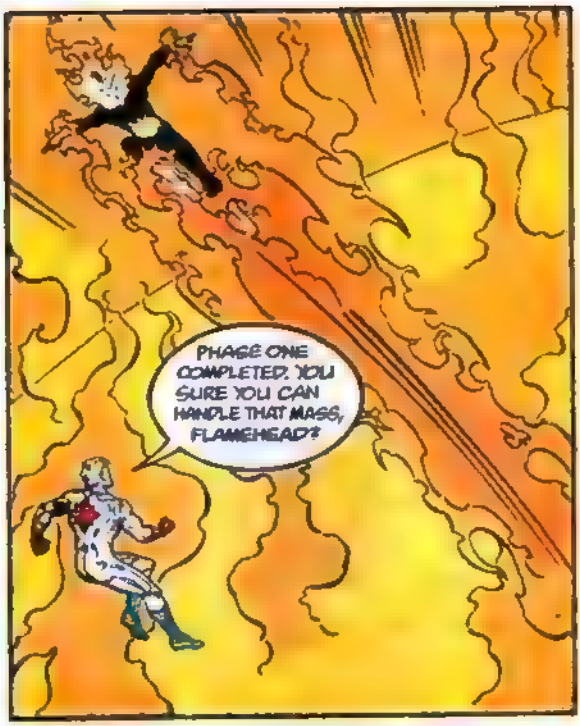
BIEN. HE IS, AS YOU SAY, GOOD AS STOPPED.

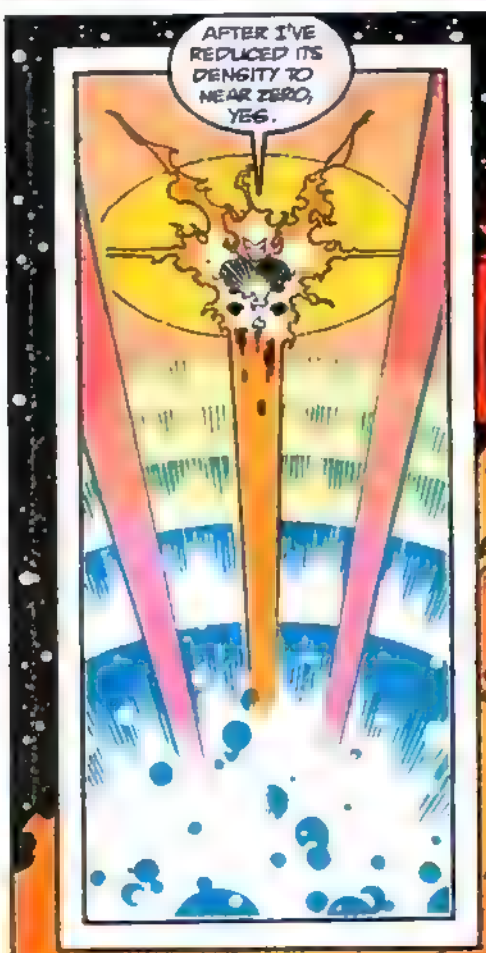
LADY! DON'T! YOU'RE TOO CLOSE! YOU'LL BE KILLED!

BWA-
DOO
OOOM!
NOOOO!
NOOOOOO!
EASE UP, KIDDIES. THE HEAVYWEIGHT'S HERE.
KATHOOM!
ENOUGH GAMES I GOT A DATE TONIGHT
SCHRAAK!

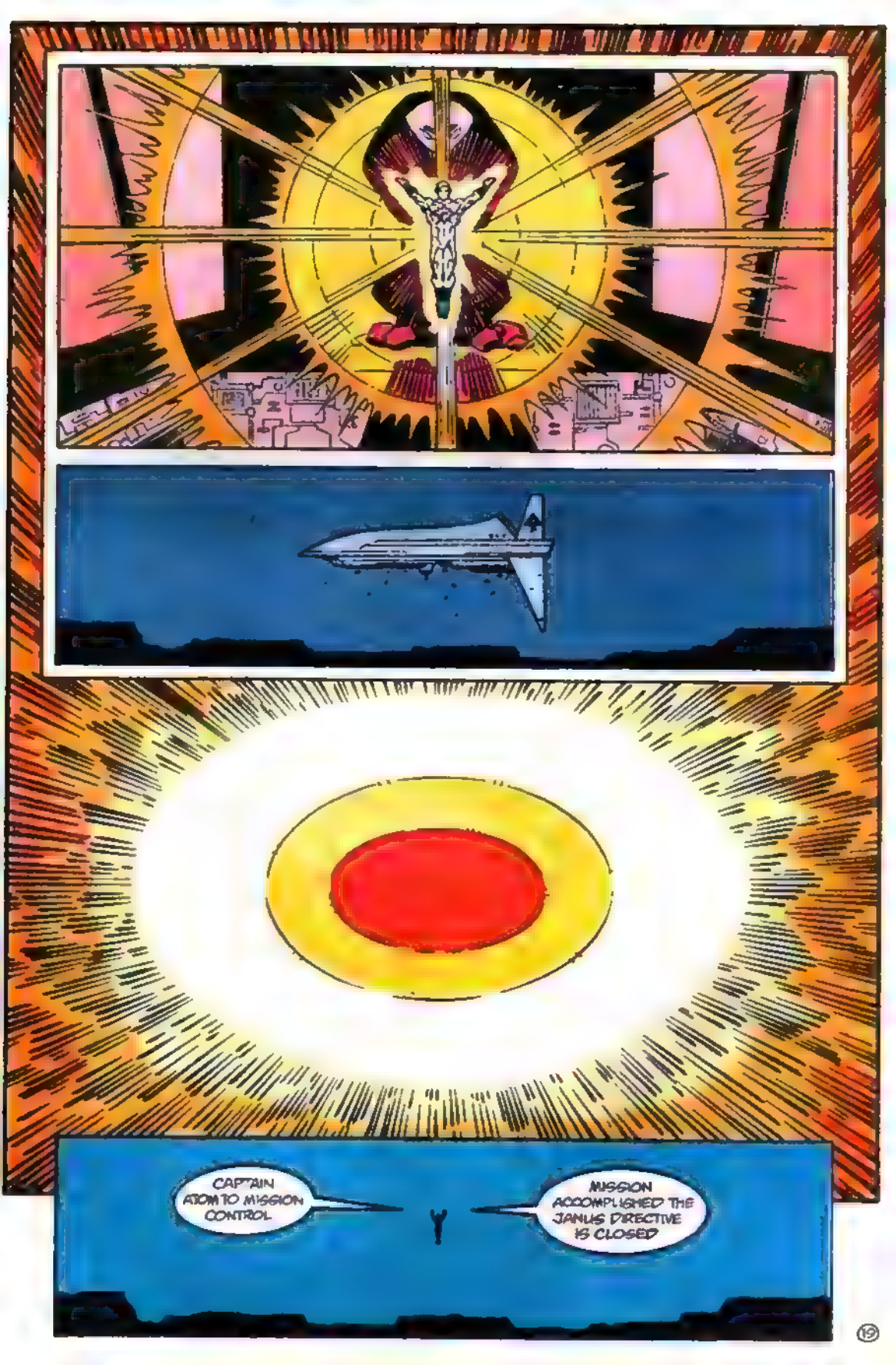
WHITE QUEEN TO ROOK CONTROL. PHASE ONE COMPLETED. COMMENCING PHASE TWO.
CONGRATULATIONS. YOU GOT TEN MINUTES OR WE BLOW THE ARK WITH YOU IN IT.
WE'RE ALIVE--FOR THE MOST PART. LADY LIBERTY AND SILENT MAJORITY ARE BOTH DEAD. MANHUNTER AND KOBRA ARE MISSING. WANT US TO LOOK?
NO. KOBRA'S PROBABLY ESCAPED.
WUMP!
SCRATCH THAT. KOBRA JUST TURNED UP.
MY MY MY SO DID MANHUNTER.
TELL THE FAT LADY SHE OWES ME EXTRA FOR THIS GIG.
AND TELL HER IT'S THE LAST ONE I'M EVER DOING FOR HER.
17


YOU CAN TELL HER YOURSELF IN A LITTLE BIT. IT'S TIME TO LEAVE.
MAJOR FORCE, IT'S YOUR SHOW.


PHASE ONE COMPLETED. YOU SURE YOU CAN HANDLE THAT MASS, FLAMEHEAD?


AFTER I'VE REDUCED ITS DENSITY TO NEAR ZERO, YES.

THE SHIP IS YOURS.
I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.


CAPTAIN ATOM TO MISSION CONTROL
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED THE JANUS DIRECTIVE IS CLOSED

EPILOGUE ONE: AT BELLE REVE...

YOU'RE FREE TO GO NOW, MS. LANE.

I AM SUING YOU, KALE, AND THE GOVERNMENT FOR KIDNAPPING, FALSE ARREST, AND WHATEVER ELSE I CAN THINK OF -- RIGHT AFTER I SMEAR THIS WHOLE AFFAIR ACROSS THE FRONT PAGE OF THE PLANET!

THEN YOU'LL WAIT A LONG TIME, LOIS. THEY'VE GOTTEN A VERY THOROUGH INJUNCTION AGAINST YOU.

I'M YOUR LAWYER AND YOU CAN'T EVEN TELL ME ABOUT IT. IT'S ACTUALLY A VERY IMPRESSIVE BIT OF LEGAL GAND'BASHING

I HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED YOUR STAY AT BELLE REVE, MS. LANE. YOU'RE INVITED BACK ANY TIME.

PROVIDED, OF COURSE, THAT YOU CAN GET THE NECESSARY SECURITY CLEARANCE.

YOU KEEP ON LAUGHING, BUSTER--

--BECAUSE I WILL BE BACK AND I WILL FIND OUT EVERYTHING THAT'S WRIGGLING UNDER YOUR GLUMY ROCK AND I'LL MAKE YOU SO SORRY THAT YOU EVER HEARD THE NAME OF LOIS...!

SPLOOT

SOMEONE IS GOING TO HAVE TO PAY A TERRIBLE PRICE FOR THIS

EPILOGUE TWO WASHINGTON D.C.
...THE CHARGES WERE ALSO RECOVERED FROM THE ARK. THEY WERE TORTURED BUT WE GOT TO THEM IN TIME AND, WITH A BIT OF HOSPITAL STAY, BOTH SHOULD BE FINE.
KOBRA HAS BEEN REMANDED INTO THE CUSTODY OF BELLE REVE, AWAITING TRIAL. MAXIMUM SECURITY A TOP SECRET DESIGNATION HAS BEEN SLAPPED ON THE WHOLE AFFAIR AND ALL THE CAPTIVES HAVE BEEN ADVISED NOT TO SPEAK OF WHAT HAPPENED WITH ANYONE THAT'S IT, MR. PRESIDENT.
WELL, THIS REALLY SUCKS WORMS.
YOU PEOPLE MAKE YOUR LIVING BY DECEIT AND SKULDUGGERY WELL, HECK -SO DID I AT ONE TIME I UNDERSTAND ALL ABOUT INTERDEPARTMENTAL RIVALRY.
YOU PEOPLE RAISED IT TO AN ART FORM! THE ONLY REASON KOBRA GOT AS FAR AS HE DID WAS HE PLAYED ON YOU PEOPLE LIKE VIOLINS!
SO WE'RE GOING TO MAKE SURE THIS NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN WITH A LITTLE REORGANIZATION.

SARGE STEEL, YOU'LL CONTINUE YOUR RECENT JOB OF OVERSEEING ALL METAHUMAN COVERT ACTIVITIES AS A CABINET LEVEL OFFICIAL REPORTING DIRECTLY TO ME.
THE CBI WILL CONTINUE SUBSTANTIALLY AS IT WAS, BEING YOUR PRINCIPAL AGENTS.
YOU, GENERAL EILING, WILL OVERSEE ALL MILITARY USE OF METAHUMANS. THE DAY TO DAY OPERATIONS OF THE ATOM PROJECT WILL BE ASSIGNED TO CAPTAIN ALLARD. YOU'LL ALSO REPORT TO SARGE STEEL.
TASK FORCE X IS DISSOLVED. CHECKMATE WILL RUN AS AN INDEPENDENT AGENCY, REPORTING TO SARGE STEEL. PROJECT PEACEMAKER WILL BECOME A PART OF CHECKMATE. HARRY, YOU'LL ALSO REPORT TO STEEL.
MRS. WALLER, YOU WILL REMAIN--FOR THE MOMENT--AS HEAD OF THE SUICIDE SQUAD. MAJOR VICTORY WILL ALSO BE ASSIGNED TO THE SQUAD. YOU NOW REPORT TO STEEL, TOO.
YOUR REMAINING THE HEAD OF THE SQUAD PERMANENTLY WILL DEPEND ON HOW MUCH OF A TEAM PLAYER YOU SHOW YOURSELF TO BE.
WHY AM I BEING SINGLED OUT HERE?! IF IT WASN'T FOR ME, KOBRA WOULD'VE WON! I'M THE ONE WHO SMOKED HIM OUT!
AND YOU NEVER TOLD ME.
YOU'VE PLAYED THE LONE WOLF TOO OFTEN, MRS. WALLER, AND YOU ENJOY IT TOO MUCH. THAT MAY HAVE WORKED UNDER THE FORMER ADMINISTRATION BUT IT WON'T WORK UNDER MINE.
END OF DISCUSSION!

EPILOGUE 3. BELLE REVE...
GLAD TO SEE YOU MADE IT BACK. I WON THE POOL. HOW'S VIXEN?
SHE'LL BE OKAY IN A LITTLE WHILE. NO PERMANENT DAMAGE.
THIS WHERE THEY LOCKED UP KOBRA?
"YEAH. CAN YOU BELIEVE THE CREEP THANKED US AS WE SLAPPED HIM INTO SOLITARY? GAD IT WAS JUST WHAT HE NEEDED RIGHT NOW."
"I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT, MURPH; HE WAS JUST TRYING TO RATTLE YOUR CAGE AS HE GOT INTO HIS OWN.
"HE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE."
BELOVED...
NEXT TIME: SETTLING DUST

SUICIDE NOTES

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Dear John, Kim, Bob, Carl, Karl and Company,

Although I get the uneasy feeling that you folks will soon regret your decision to reveal the existence of the Squad to the world (the implications of a squad of government sanctioned criminals operating in public should have a major impact in every single DC comic), I gotta admit that it's been interesting to watch Waller stand up to the increasing pressure.

Waller is under Senate investigation, her staff is in open mutiny, Oracle has breached her security system, Nemesis has questioned her authority and, to top it off, she's sent the Squad into another sticky international situation. I hope she learns a lesson from these experiences and becomes a bit more compassionate. While it would be a mistake to make her an open-hearted den mother while she is working with killers, thieves, degenerates, and crazies, it certainly wouldn't hurt if you made her somewhat likeable.

Though I'm concerned about the direction Waller's problems are taking, I'm even more concerned about the new line-up of the Squad. Dr. Light is a truly lame character who isn't competent enough to stay with the group very long. Punch and Jewelee are not only weak characters, they are just plain silly and add no raw power to the team, although I'm sure they'll generate some interest if they play "hide the salami" every issue. Shade has been shoved so far into the background that he seldom gets even a dialogue balloon any more. Count Vertigo is so obscure I don't even remember what hero he originally fought.

In fact, I think it would be a good idea to run a list of featured villains' appearances at the end of the letter column. It might generate new interest in some of the minor villains who sometimes pop up in SS.

T.E. Pouncey
Wichita, KS

* * * * *

Dear Squad,

SUICIDE SQUAD is the best title DC publishes. The series always keeps me on the edge.

Just read issue #24. I'm disappointed in the new members. All are bland and boring. I didn't like the scenes where everyone's getting along. I like to see conflict in the group—and lots of it! I enjoyed watching Vixen and Bronze Tiger's romance develop.

Another thing I don't like about the series is that when people die they eventually pop up somewhere else in the Universe à la Brimstone, Blockbuster, Mindboggler, and Slipknot. It makes the series cheap when these dead characters appear somewhere else.

Captain Boomerang is a definite plus! He needs a woman in his life. A couple that can connive together like Gina and Keith on *Santa Barbara*—!

I have a feeling Colonel Computron is manipulating the computers. At least I hope so. By the way, I'm surprised Amanda didn't get Cecile Horton, who did an excellent job with Barry Allen.

Any chance of seeing Gypsy, Moonbow, Gorilla Grodd, or Creeper join the Squad?

Tom Trout
7265 St. Route 598
Shelby, OH 44875

Ah, Tom, I hate to break this to you, but other than Brimstone (who was never really alive), none of the dead have turned up anywhere else. Slipknot's arm was blown off in #9 and we haven't seen him since. Mindboggler certainly hasn't shown up anywhere and we've created a new Blockbuster, not resurrected the old one.

Sorry, but it is not Colonel Computron behind Oracle. By now you may have a better clue. And Amanda hired the best defense attorney she could find—Cecile may have done an adequate job with Barry but he was still found guilty.

Of your suggestions, none are on tap for the line-up but ya never know.

* * * * *

Dear All,

Amanda's not happy, is she? Boy, I love it when she's mad! SQUAD #24 was excellent! The scenes were riveting and each sequence gave us pieces of the Squad's future, and Amanda's, as well. Somehow I can't see her behind bars, but wouldn't it be ironic, if not *fun*, if she were to be an inmate at Belle Reve if convicted of anything illegal? Now, there would be some great tales!

The line-up is quite diverse now: they've "lost" the Enchantress, Nemesis, Flag, Deadshot, Black Orchid (whose mini-series, by the way, is *superb*!) and soon Nightshade and Shrike. Eve has always been fed up with Waller, and now that Tom and Rick are gone, she's soon to follow. And Shrike? She'll be offed in battle next issue, I'm sure. Another senseless sacrifice thanks to Mr. Ostrander (her attachment to Vixen was funny—nice JLA continuity, thanks?). I think your line-up is good. Vixen, Bronze Tiger, Ravan, Shade, Duchess (I can't wait for her story to unfold), Punch and Jewelee and Count Vertigo were all favorites of mine. But please get rid of Dr. Light and Boomerang. They're about as useless as mud.

As to some of your plotlines: is the Trickster the one throwing the pies at Belle Reve, or was it Punch & Jewelee? Or, could it have been Father Craemer releasing some pent-up frustration? And as to the computer personality that's got Flo puzzled, could that be Byte from the Firestorm rogues gallery?

Mike Allen
Sgt. Bluff, IA

We're going to see more pies fly next month so you'll just have to wait a little longer. And no, it ain't Byte. Keep guessing.

* * * * *

Dear John, Robert, Luke, Todd and Company,

The original Dr. Light as a member of the Suicide Squad, way to go. I am extremely pleased by this move since I am a Dr. Light fan. Yes, there are actually some of us out there. You're probably wondering why. In May, 1981 I was on my way home from high school and on the seat opposite me was a comic book someone had left there. It was NEW TEEN TITANS #7. At that time I thought I was above comics so I was taking little notice of it. Trouble was there was this guy in a black costume on the front cover who I wanted to find out about. So when no one was looking, I picked it up and read the comic. Of course his name was Dr. Light and I really enjoyed the comic, so next day on my way home I went to see what other comics there were, bought some and continued to do this over the years. So you see it was Arthur who got me interested in comics and won me as a fan out of gratitude.

I like any story involving Arthur

and I'm overjoyed to see him in a comic on a constant basis month after month, so don't kill him off. I would like to see Arthur get more involved with the Squad and increase his control over light. I think Dr. Light and Nightshade would make a great team as the power of each complements the other and since each is almost an opposite of the other, there's bound to be a lot of dialogue between the two.

Rick MacLean
6 Crofton Street
Geebung 4034
Queensland, Australia

*****

Dear Bob,

The guilty never consider their sins until punishment is inflicted, always justifying their actions in their own eyes. Few criminals consider their actions wrong or immoral, as the evil is explained away, protecting their Ego.

Nice to see Amanda Waller flashback on her sins and mistakes, attempting to form a chronological chain of events that led her to this point. Odd that she perceives her errors prior to an indictment. I find this incredibly perceptive of her, yet an example of Waller's character. She was raised with morals, and lives by them. While they may not concur with society's, they nevertheless more nearly parallel them than do Boomerang's.

Waller had lost much of her vision in her time with the Squad. Perhaps she needed to go through such an ordeal to appreciate her colleagues and position. A light shines at the end of the tunnel; let us hope Amanda Waller makes it there a better and brighter person.

Incidentally, I'm glad to see Kim Yale's name on the credits. She seems to bring out the best in John's work.

Mark Lucas
66 Cleary Court #902
San Francisco, CA 94109

*****

Dear Squad Members,

SUICIDE SQUAD #24 was a good read. From beginning to end it was a well constructed piece of work. "Slings and Arrows" was a perfect choice for the title, very fitting.

Amanda Waller appears to be changing in some ways; actually she was always undergoing change, however subtle, even in the flashbacks that tell us her "origin." The only trouble with the emphasis on Mrs. Waller was the lack of space to better present the newer Squad members, especially Shrike whom I know almost nothing about. I guess I haven't read all DC's titles past and present. I hope this lack of info on the new members will be rectified next issue. I know last issue featured capsule comments on each of them, but when it got to Shrike the scene changed.

I'm sorry to see Nemesis go, but I hope this means he will get to appear elsewhere, maybe get his own series. He'd also make a great team-up for Mark Shaw or the Human Target. I'd also like to see him team up with Batman again. His departure was logical, well written, and believable. I found myself thinking I'd feel the same way if I were in his place.

Simon LaGrieve's departure will also have an effect on the book. His "farewell" scene played well. Let's not see him just disappear into the woodwork; he's a good character.

This issue also touched on famine and starvation without sensationalizing it or saying, "Okay, superpowered people—solve the problem." That would be unrealistic. The all-out battle scenes were interesting, but there were too many characters to show them all in action properly. I hope this, too, will be rectified next issue.

I'm sorry to see Luke McDonnell leave the book. His art style came to characterize the Squad for me. When others drew the members in their crossover stories they were usually drawn at least competently, but it still looked different. I won't be without McDonnell art in my future, however, as I planned to buy the new PHANTOM series before I knew who was doing the art.

Stephen Cade
339-12 Avenue NW
Calgary, Alberta
Canada

*****

Dear Mr. Greenberger,

There are matters involving the Suicide Squad in particular that I want to comment on; however, there is the matter of comments made in the lettercols of SECRET ORIGINS #32 and DOOM PATROL #19 that are the cause of considerable consternation to me—among them that bit about the Second Super-Hero Era being ten years old, going on eleven, having begun with Superman's public debut. If you're wondering, why mention it here, consider how many titles have their villains pass through the Squad's pages.

Ever since I read the Nightwing story in SECRET ORIGINS I have been of the belief that the modern age began with The Batman 12 years before the Crisis. Also, I firmly believe the evidence indicating that everything since the Crisis has occurred within a real-time framework. This evidence can be found in the following series: CAPTAIN ATOM, BOOSTER GOLD, THE QUESTION, SECRET ORIGINS, HAWKMAN, SUICIDE SQUAD, MILLENNIUM, and NEW GUARDIANS. I don't recall the specific issue numbers, but since I've already defined the time frame, it shouldn't be too difficult to find them. My theory also has Batman getting eight years seniority over the Man of Steel. I would like to see any comments that you or anyone else may have on the matter.

Now, on the Squad. We're in the process of watching a shake-up that looks to be continuing for the next four to six months, what with the Washington hearings, the Rick Flag resolution and this Janus Directive business. Definitely worth watching.

As for future recruits, don't bring in The Trickster. He's reformed and I don't want done to him what was done to the Penguin and Catwoman. Those two were re-villainized in the mistaken belief that no Bat-rogue should ever be allowed to clean up his or her act for good. I want that sort of thing halted in the Bat-books themselves and kept from spreading to other ex-villains.

Heroes and villains I do want to see: Bolt, Cannon and Saber, Wild Dog, Shatterfist, Overthrow, Hazard, Shakedown, Heatstroke, Coldsnap, and New-Wave.

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Sorry to disappoint you, Dwight, but as far as the entire editorial team is concerned, the second age of heroes began with Supes maybe *11 years ago. We have to constantly revise downward the length of time our heroes have been around since we publish every year. The parallel worlds were originally introduced to allow the older versions of heroes to have a place of their own and actually age. Yet we constantly compress time, which is why characters age ever so slowly and few series really work in real time (QUESTION and SWAMP THING come to mind). The Crisis was maybe two years ago, Legends and Millennium happened after that, all within a compressed reality. We have to do that and no doubt, in a few more years, we'll revise everything again.*

One reason we're basing everything on Superman's debut has to do with honoring his place as our premier hero. No way could Bats have eight years on him that way.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Father Craemer gets to conduct our annual "Personal Files" tour of the Squad as we watch tempers flare, pies fly, lists get made and secrets get revealed. You won't want to miss the fun there, especially as John K. Snyder gets to stretch himself and ink his own pencils.

Unfortunately, schedules and a relocation to the Pacific Northwest is forcing Karl to reluctantly leave our team once again. It was great having him here and you'll continue to see the odd cover from him, but this is his final issue. Good luck, Karl!

Drop us a line, root for the Mets, and keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger